

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 496

By Crowe

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Captain Jack Arnold Thompson and his meritorious service to the United States.

WHEREAS, our nation was conceived by individuals who were willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure our individual and collective freedom, and the Volunteer State is especially proud to be the home of so many valiant men and women who have performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, thousands of Tennesseans have continued this time-honored tradition of volunteerism through service in the United States Armed Forces; Jack Arnold Thompson is one such estimable individual who served his country with honor and courage; and

WHEREAS, born in Washington County and raised in Unicoi County, Mr. Thompson pursued formal education only through the eighth grade before he had to quit school to do his part to help support his family during the Great Depression; during those years, he developed character, a strong work ethic, determination, and ingenuity which would serve him so well in his future endeavors; and

WHEREAS, with the world well on the way to World War II, Jack Thompson voluntarily joined the Army Air Corps in 1939 at Ft. Oglethorpe, Georgia; after attending basic training at Maxwell Field in Alabama, he earned his pilot's wings at Fort Sumner, New Mexico and

transitioned to flying B-17s at Roswell, New Mexico and then flying B-24s at March Field, California; and

WHEREAS, on "December 7, 1941, a date which will live in infamy, the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan"; stationed at Hickam Field as a B-17 gunner with the 26th Squadron, 11th Bomb Group, Jack Thompson was able only to fire at enemy planes from the ground during the attack on Pearl Harbor, which precipitated the involvement of the United States in World War II; and

WHEREAS, as the war raged on, this gallant pilot would rarely again be left grounded when the time came for action; he flew throughout the South Pacific, including missions over the Philippines, Leyte, Formosa, Hong Kong, Okinawa, and the Japanese home islands; and

WHEREAS, repeatedly staving off attack by Japanese "Zeros," he flew 36 combat missions with the 5th Air Force as Pilot-in-Command of B-24s; and

WHEREAS, following Japan's fall and the end of the War, Jack Thompson remained in the Army Air Corps and continued developing a sterling reputation as an aviator, serving at Bolling Field in Washington, D.C., and at Davis-Monthan, Arizona; during this period, he engaged in refueling the *Lucky Lady* during her record-breaking, non-stop flight around the world; and

WHEREAS, while flying a B-50 over Labrador, he lost three engines and had to bail out along with his crew; later, General Curtis LeMay, Commander of the Strategic Air Command, personally commended Jack Thompson for utilizing exceptional survival skills in saving his crew, while awaiting rescue from the barren wasteland; and

WHEREAS, this noble airman returned to combat during the Korean War, again earning the respect and admiration of his men for his laudable service in defense of his country; stationed at Yokota Air Base in Japan with the 98th Bomb Group, he flew six combat missions in B-29s; and

WHEREAS, after Korea, he was assigned to Strategic Air Command at Lincoln Air Base in Nebraska; from there, he took a well-deserved retirement, having earned the rank of Captain, Senior Pilot; and

WHEREAS, for his laudable service to the United States, Captain Jack Thompson earned much distinction and numerous honors; his awards included the Silver Star for gallantry in action at the Battle of Midway, the Pearl Harbor Medal, the Philippine Liberation Ribbon, the Korea Commendation, and the Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster; and

WHEREAS, for rescuing a crewman at Labrador, Captain Thompson received the Soldiers Medal, the highest peacetime award given by the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, although he earned virtually every medal awarded, Captain Thompson never received a Purple Heart, due to the remarkable fact that neither he nor any member of his crew was ever wounded in action; fully cognizant of their good fortune in serving under such a highly capable officer, his crewmen had a saying, "If you want to come back, fly with Jack"; and

WHEREAS, when the freedom of our nation, and the world was threatened by foreign aggression, Captain Thompson joined the many men and women of his era who left their normal lives behind to oppose tyranny, defend liberty and ensure opportunity for the generations that would follow; and

WHEREAS, the courageous efforts of his generation shaped the global landscape for decades to follow and earned them the rightful recognition as the "Greatest Generation" that the world has ever produced; and

WHEREAS, unlike many of his fellow soldiers, who were content to return to civilian life following their estimable service during World War II, Captain Jack Thompson made the commendable decision to remain active in the military to help ensure that the successes of the war were not squandered and to defend his nation against future threats; and

WHEREAS, Captain Jack Thompson served with an uncommon courage and gallantry that deserves proper recognition; and

WHEREAS, Captain Thompson performed his duties with the utmost skill, dedication and professionalism, and his selfless service to his country will be long remembered and treasured by his fellow Tennesseans; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we hereby honor the memory of Captain Jack Arnold Thompson, United States Air Force, Retired, reflecting fondly upon his selfless devotion, unsurpassed moral courage, and meritorious service in the United States Armed Forces, as we express our pride in, and gratitude for, his supreme contributions to this State and our Nation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.